



## Senator Feinstein Calls for Phased Troop Redeployment of U.S. Forces in Iraq to Begin by Year's End

June 20, 2006

*Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today spoke on the floor of the United States Senate to call for phased troop redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq to begin by year's end. Yesterday, Senator Feinstein joined with Senators Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), and Ken Salazar (D-Colo.) to offer an amendment that urges the President to press the Iraqis to take greater responsibility for their own security and future. The following is the text of Senator Feinstein's remarks, as delivered:*

**"Mr. President, as has been said, more than 2,500 brave men and women of America's fighting forces have now been killed in Iraq. Another 18,500 have been wounded. The victims of this violence include two American soldiers captured in an ambush at a checkpoint south of Baghdad who were brutally tortured, killed, and left surrounded by roadside bombs. I join with all of my colleagues in offering our deepest sympathies.**

**Yet with American troops now caught in the middle of raging sectarian violence, it is all too likely that such heinous acts will go on and on. This war, originally projected to last but a few months, has gone on for 39 months with no end in sight.**

**Our nation is spending \$2.5 billion a week on the conflict, and the violence has worsened.**

**Iraqis have suffered greatly. More than 30,000 civilians have been killed, including 4,000 in the past 3 months alone. And another 90,000 Iraqis have had to flee their homes and their country to avoid the bloodshed.**

**In the past 5 days alone, according to news reports, nearly 100 civilians have been murdered in car bombings, shootings and other attacks, despite a new security crackdown by Iraqi and American forces.**

**For example, on Friday, 16 people were killed and 28 wounded when a shoe bomber blew himself up inside the Buratha mosque during religious services.**

**Saturday, one of the bloodiest days yet in recent months, over 40 civilians died in a series of car bombs and mortar attacks around Baghdad.**

**Day after day and month after month, we see that an open-ended commitment of United States forces neither controls nor abates the insurgency, but rather it appears to inflame it.**

**What is becoming very apparent is that the murderous conflicts that bloody Baghdad and other cities daily can only be reduced by Iraqis -- Iraqis who are willing and able to come together and stop this brutal and ruthless violence.**

**So I rise today to say that the time has come for the United States to recognize that United States troops cannot abate this kind of sectarian violence; only Iraqis can.**

**Late last year, Congress approved and President Bush signed into law an amendment that was in this very Defense authorization bill.**

**That amendment pointed out that: Calendar year 2006 -- that this year -- should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the security of a free and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for the phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq.**

**Mr. President, 79 Senators from both sides of the aisle voted for this amendment, and I believe the amendment presented today that we are debating right now is the right way to follow up on this earlier Senate initiative. It is not cut-and-run by any stretch of the imagination.**

**When President Bush staged his brief visit to Baghdad last week, he told Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki that he came to look him 'in the eye.' Now it is time for the President of the United States to look the American people in the eye.**

**As a nation, we have had enough repetition of slogans and reassurances that have become increasingly hollow in the continuing blast of roadside bombs and the rattle of automatic gunfire. No longer will 'we stand down when they stand up' suffice for policy. No, Mr. President, we want you to recognize this.**

**Three years ago, the United States may have been misguided into war in Iraq, but now most certainly the country must not be misguided about the realities in Iraq today and the need to change our mission.**

**What is victory in a land torn by its own warring factions? Is it quite possibly allowing Iraqis to solve Iraqi problems and to remove the shibboleth of an ongoing occupying army making decisions that should be left to Iraqis?**

**Despite what may have been said these past few days, our amendment is not about cutting and running. Rather, our amendment acknowledges that staying the course is a strategy that shows no promise of success, and it is time to change that strategy.**

**There remains a thunderstorm of conflicting forces over much of Iraq. Questing for dominance are al-Qaeda, nationalistic Baathists left over from the days of Saddam's tyranny, and an array of rival religious armies. The battle lines are as uncertain and diverse as are the competing objectives of the various combatants.**

**True, there have been some other positive developments. Iraq finally put a constitutional government in place last month, 5 months after the December 15 election.**

**After extensive deliberation and debate, the Iraqi Government is finally functioning, but much work remains to be done by the Iraqi people and their elected leaders, for only they can ultimately defeat the forces that have left the Iraqi nation on the brink of civil war. There are now over 260,000 Iraqi military and police personnel who have been trained and equipped, well over three-quarters of the way to reaching the Pentagon's stated goal of establishing an Iraqi force of 325,000 troops. Of the 102 operational Iraqi Army combat battalions, 69 are either in the lead or operating independently. That is over 60,000 soldiers.**

**Now that Iraqis have assumed the reins of control, it is critical that the United States not be caught in the middle of the ongoing carnage, sectarian violence, and civil strife.**

**I believe strongly that our mission in Iraq needs to change: train police and military, provide necessary infrastructure assistance, advise when asked, but now that the entire Iraqi leadership is in place, it is time for the phased redeployment promised last year in this bill to begin.**

**Our amendment calls on the administration to prepare and present to Congress and the American people by the end of this year a plan outlining the steps needed to proceed with the redeployment of our troops, either back to the United States or to other critical areas of potential terrorist conflict around the globe.**

**This amendment would place the Senate on record asking that the President expedite the transition of U.S. forces in Iraq to a limited presence and confine the mission to training and providing logistical support to Iraqi security forces.**

**We request the President to begin the phased redeployment of forces this year. It would ask that the President submit a plan to the Congress by the end of 2006 with estimated -- estimated -- days for the continued phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.**

**Is this too much to ask 3 years and 3 months into the most costly conflict the United States has yet entered into?**

**It would also ask the President to convene an international conference to bring together the international community to discuss and implement a strategy to assisting Iraq's development and infrastructure.**

**This amendment also calls on the Iraqi Government to, one, achieve a broad-based and sustainable political settlement within its own groups of people; two, share political power and economic resources among all Iraqi groups; three, develop a unifying constitution; and, four, disarm the militias and remove members of the Iraqi security forces whose loyalty to the new government is in doubt.**

Moreover, and most importantly, it is increasingly clear that the Iraqis themselves wish to see a structured downsizing of American troops in their country. Why don't we listen?

Senator Clinton eloquently pointed this out, and it bears repeating. The new Iraqi National Security Adviser first said a week ago, and then more recently in a *Washington Post* op-ed just yesterday, that the Iraqi Government hopes that by year's end, United States troop levels will be under 100,000, and that most of the remaining troops will return home by the end of 2007.

We don't make accusations of the Iraqi National Security Adviser. I have a hard time understanding why the opposite side makes accusations of us when we simply say we agree with the Iraqis, whose business it is to know this, chart this, advise this, and carry this out.

He states unequivocally that Iraq's ambition is to have full control of his country by the end of 2008. He says: The removal of coalition troops from Iraqi streets will help the Iraqis, who now see our troops as occupiers rather than the liberators they were meant to be.

Members, this is the Iraqi National Security Adviser saying that the Iraqi people now see our troops as occupiers rather than the liberators they were once meant to be. This is a point worthy of serious consideration by this body.

Al-Rubaie goes on to suggest that such a drawdown: 'Will legitimize Iraq's government in the eyes of its people' and 'strengthen it to last the full four years it is supposed to.' A drawdown, he says, will legitimize Iraq's Government in the eyes of its people and strengthen it to last the 4 years it is supposed to. Why don't we listen?

And he concludes yesterday's op-ed by stating -- and I find this eloquent:

'Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States and the coalition, take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems, with the knowledge that our friends and allies are standing by with support and help should we need it.'

This is exactly what this legislation would do. If the Iraqi National Security Adviser is willing to put forward goals and timetables for the downsizing of the American troop presence in Iraq, why shouldn't the President of the United States?

I hope this body will join together in a bipartisan fashion, as we did last year, and call for the redeployment and transition of the United States mission in Iraq beginning this year. Three years and 3 months. This hasn't been 30 days, it hasn't been 60 days or 90 days. It has been 3 years and 3 months with 'stay the course,' and things get worse and worse. Now we have the National Security Adviser in Iraq saying essentially exactly what the amendment before us today says. Are we going to listen to him or do we think we know better?

I believe this is the right thing to do for our troops who have sacrificed so much. It is the right thing to do for their families who wait anxiously for them to return home. It is the

**right thing to do for the overwhelming majority of the American people who have stated clearly their desire for a change of course in Iraq.**

**I believe it is the right thing to do for the Iraqi people. They are prepared to stand up. They are prepared to handle their own destiny. I believe Iraq should be for Iraqis.**

**Thank you, and I yield the floor.”**

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